DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 315 CG 021 928

AUTHOR Galambos, Nancy L.; Maggs, Jennifer L.
TITLE The After-School Ecology of Young Adolescents and Self-Reported Behavior.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Kansas City, MO, April 27-30, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Behavior; Employed Parents; Foreign Countries; *Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; *Latchkey Children; Predictor Variables; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS Canada

ABSTRACT

With the majority of mothers of school-aged children now in the labor force, there is much concern about the supervision of these children when the parents are at work and school is out. Of particular concern are children in self-care after school, many of whom spend their time in places other than home. This study contrasted sixth-graders in adult-care with sixth-graders in self-care. Subjects (N=112) were sixth-graders from two-parent families in which both parents are employed on a part- or full-time basis. Data from the analyses were generated from questionnaires by the families on two occasions 6 months apart. A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses examined the effects of sex of adolescent, self-care status, and parental work hours on peer experience and self-image. The results indicated that variation in self-care experience was more important for predicting behavior than was the number of hours both parents were working. The kinds of arrangements that were made for children when the parents were away had more import for understanding adolescent behavior than how much the parents worked. Self-care experience had more direct implications for peer activities than it did for self-image. Girls who were unsupervised were more at risk for problem behavior than were boys. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED311315

The After-School Ecology of Young Adolescents and Self-Reported Behavior

Nancy L. Galambos and Jennifer L. Maggs

University of Victoria

CG 021928

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nancy Galambos

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the April, 1989 Biennial Meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, Missouri, in C. Jan Carpenter (Chair), Effects of maternal employment on the social ecology of pre-adolescents. Correspondence may be sent to: N. Galambos, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y2, Canada.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The After-School Ecology of Young Adolescents and Self-Reported Behavior

With the majority of mothers of school-age children now in the labor force, there is much concern about the supervision of these children when parents are at work and school is out. Of particular concern is the phenomenon of children who care for themselves after school. Children in self-care are often called "latchkey children." The term "latchkey children," however, refers mainly to those children who stay home after school when, in fact, many children in self-care spend their time in places other than home (Rodman, Pratto, & Nelson, 1988; Steinberg, 1988).

There are two contrasting perspectives about children in self-care. On the one hand, many writers have claimed that self-care has deleterious consequences for the psychosocial development of the child. On the other, writers have argued that self-care may be beneficial with respect to learning responsibility and independence (Galambos & Dixon, 1984). Very little systematic research, however, has addressed negative or positive consequences of self-care. The few studies that exist inform us that on measures of self-esteem, academic achievement, and locus of control, children in self-care do not differ from adult-supervised children (Galambos & Garbarino, 1985; Rodman, Pratto, & Nelson, 1985; Vandell & Corasaniti, 1988).

Recently, Larry Steinberg (1986) criticized the available research on two grounds. First, earlier comparisons between

self- and adult-care children failed to consider the variation in self-care situations. That is, some children stay home, some go to a friend's house, and others hang out in public places. Second, the dependent measures selected in the past were global indices of adjustment that are less likely to be directly affected by the self-care situation than are other behaviors such as involvement with peers, conformity to peer pressure, and problem behavior or minor delinquency.

To improve upon previous research, Steinberg (1986) conceptualized self-care by contrasting adult-care adolescents with adolescents in several unsupervised situations (e.g., those who stay home, those who go to a friend's house, and those who just "hang out"). Steinberg found that self-care adolescents who hang out were more likely to conform to antisocial peer pressure (as measured by responses to hypothetical situations) than were self-care adolescents who go to a friend's house or who stay home after school. This research points to the necessity for considering different self-care situations as well as examining behaviors that might be directly linked with these situations, for example, activities with peers.

The goal of the present study is to address several questions. First, although Steinberg found that some adolescents in self-care seemed likely to conform to antisocial peer pressure, his study did not examine whether these adolescents were actually hanging out with antisocial or deviant peers. Nor was there any information as to whether unsupervised adolescents

away from home were, in fact, engaged in problem behavior or minor delinquency. Second, given that the majority of children in self-care are unsupervised for less than one hour per day (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987), it would be wise to consider the number of hours that no parents are home when the child is not in school. For example, adolescents who hang out for 45 minutes after school while their parents are away may be less likely to get into trouble than those who hang out for 3 hours after school. Third, to date self-care has been studied only during the school year. What happens to children who are in self-care during the summer, with a potentially larger number of hours that they may go unsupervised? Fourth, no studies have considered whether there are longer-term effects of self-care.

Using data from a study of two-earner families with sixth-grade children, the present investigation contrasts sixth graders in adult-care with sixth graders in several self-care situations, on two occasions of measurement, one in the winter and one in the summer. We asked the following questions (overhead #1).

1. To what extent is variation in self-care predictive of peer experience (peer involvement, deviant peers, problem behavior) and self-image (impulse control, mastery, emotional tone) concurrently and six months later?

2. To what extent are parental work hours (number of hours both parents are at work) predictive of concurrent and later peer experience and self-image?

3. Does the seasonal context of self-care (winter afternoons vs. summer days) bear on the relations among self-care, peer experience, and self-image?

Method

Subjects

The subjects are 112 sixth graders from two-parent families in which both parents are employed on a part- or full-time basis (overhead #2). The "Two-Earner Family Study" is a short-term longitudinal study with three occasions of measurement (Winter, 1988, Summer, 1988, and Winter, 1989). The families cut across the working- and middle-classes. Data for the present analyses are from questionnaires completed by the families on two occasions 6 months apart (Winter, 1988 and Summer, 1988).

Measures

Predictor Variables (overhead #3)

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses examined the effects of sex of adolescent, self-care status, and parental work hours on peer experience and self-image.

Self-Care. Sixth graders were categorized into four supervision categories based on their responses to a series of questions designed by Steinberg (1986) to assess the after-school care situation. The four categories are: supervised by an adult (e.g., at home by a parent or other adult, in an after-school program), unsupervised at home, unsupervised at a friend's home, and unsupervised, "hanging out." Although Steinberg examined more categories than the four we use here, his results indicated

that it was these four categories that discriminate most among adolescents with respect to susceptibility to antisocial peer pressure. We used this measure as a continuous variable.

For the second occasion, during the summer, the series of questions was revised to reflect supervision status during the day.

Parental work hours. The work schedules of both parents were used to compute the number of hours they are at work simultaneously. For the winter measurement we assessed the number of hours per week both parents are at work in the afternoon, or the 3:00-6:00 p.m. time slot (Work-Aft). For the summer measurement we assessed the number of hours per week both parents are at work during the daytime, or the 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. time slot (Work-Day).

Dependent Variables

The dependent measures are shown in overhead #4. Three variables measured the nature of peer experiences: peer involvement, deviant peers, and problem behavior.

The peer involvement measure assessed the frequency of activities with friends in the past month, for example, going to a movie or out to eat (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986). The deviant peers measure assessed the extent to which the sixth grader associates with peers who engage in misconduct or problem behavior, for example, shoplifting or damaging property (Galambos & Silbereisen, 1987a, b). Problem behavior was a self-report measure of the frequency of misconduct by the sixth grader in the

past month, for example, shoplifting, drinking, or failing an exam (Brown et al., 1986; Kaplan, 1978).

Subscales from the Self-Image Questionnaire for Young Adolescents (Petersen, Schulenberg, Abramowitz, Offer, & Jarcho, 1984) were used to assess three aspects of self-image: impulse control, or the sixth grader's calmness under pressure; mastery, or the sixth grader's confidence in coping; and emotional tone, or the degree of positive affect in the sixth grader.

Peer experiences and dimensions of self-image were assessed to determine whether (as argued by Steinberg, 1986) self-care and parental work hours actually predict better to peer experiences than to self-image.

Results

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to examine how well self-care and parental work hours predict to peer experiences and self-image contemporaneously and longitudinally.

Time 1 (Winter) Results

In the first set of analyses, sex of the sixth grader, self-care at Time 1, and the number of hours both parents are at work after school in the wintertime were predictor variables. The self-care x sex interaction was also entered as a predictor. We looked at the dependent measures at Time 1.

Overhead #5 presents the results of these analyses. First, parental work hours after school did not predict to any of the dependent measures. Second, self-care was not an important

predictor of any of the three self-image measures. Third, self-care was important in predicting all three aspects of peer experience. With respect to the nature of self-care and peer experience three significant results appeared.

1. Peer involvement was higher among sixth graders who were unsupervised and further away from home after school. This was true for boys and girls.

2. The significant interaction between sex and self-care for the deviant peers measure indicated that unsupervised girls who were further away from home (e.g., at a friend's house or "hanging out") were more likely to have contact with friends who got into trouble relative to supervised girls. Self-care had no such effect among boys.

3. Similarly, the results for problem behavior indicated that unsupervised girls who were further away from home reported a higher number of problem behaviors than did supervised girls. There was no relationship between self-care and problem behavior among boys.

Time 2 (Summer) Results

The second set of analyses was similar to the first, but pertained to self-care and parental work hours during the summer days (overhead #6). For the most part, the findings for the summer measurement replicated those for the winter.

1. Parental work hours during the day were not associated with any of the dependent measures.

2. There were, however, significant self-care x sex interactions for deviant peers and problem behavior. Again, unsupervised girls who were further away from home associated more with deviant peers and reported a higher number of problem behaviors relative to supervised girls. There was no relationship between self-care and peer experiences in boys.

Longitudinal Results

Next, longitudinal analyses were conducted in order to determine whether self-care and parental work hours influenced peer experiences and self-image six months later. In the hierarchical multiple regression analyses, the dependent variables were peer experiences and self-image in the summer (Time 2).

The predictors in the first steps were sex, self-care (Time 1), parental work hours (Time 1), and the Time 1 self-care x sex interaction. Following the entry of these predictors, self-care (Time 2, that is, six months later), parental work hours (Time 2), and the Time 2 self-care x sex interaction were entered to examine whether the Time 2 predictors explained variance in the dependent measures above and beyond that explained by the Time 1 predictors.

Overhead #7 shows the results of these analyses, summarized as follows.

1. The Time 1 and Time 2 self-care x sex interactions were both significant predictors of problem behavior at Time 2. Unsupervised girls who were further away from home in the winter

reported higher levels of problem behavior the following summer, relative to other girls. Furthermore, self-care in the summer explained significantly more of the variance in summer problem behavior in girls.

2. Another finding was that the Time 1 self-care x sex interaction was a significant predictor of impulse control and mastery at Time 2 in girls. Girls who were unsupervised and further away from home after school in the winter reported lower levels of impulse control and lower levels of mastery the following summer.

Conclusions

The results of the present study lead to several conclusions about the nature of self-care and self-image and peer experience in adolescence (overhead #8).

First, variation in self-care experience is more important for predicting behavior than the number of hours both parents are working. The kinds of arrangements that are made for children when the parents are away have more import for understanding adolescent behavior than how much the parents work. Also, whether self-care occurs during winter afternoons or summer days appears to make no difference for adolescent behavior.

Second, self-care experience has more direct implications for peer activities than it does for self-image, although there may be delayed effects of self-care on aspects of self-image.

Third, at this age in early adolescence, girls who are

unsupervised away from home may be more at risk for problem behavior than are boys.

Why are the sixth-grade girls who are unsupervised and away from home more likely to engage in problem behavior? We suspect that the unsupervised girls who are not at home are perhaps hanging out with older boys and girls who get into trouble. Perhaps these are early-maturing girls whose parents believe they can handle more autonomy.

An examination of mean level of problem behavior across sex and self-care groups shows that among supervised adolescents, boys have higher rates of problem behavior than do girls. It is only when girls are unsupervised away from home that their rate of problem behavior equals, and even surpasses the rate among boys. It may be that some subgroups of girls will reach their peak in problem behavior earlier than do other girls and boys, and that self-care away from home may play a part in this process.

A better understanding of the ways in which self-care may influence behavior among young adolescents awaits further research.

References

Brown, B. B., Clasen, D. R., & Eicher, S. A. (1986). Perceptions of peer pressure, peer conformity dispositions, and self-reported behavior among adolescents. Developmental Psychology, 22, 521-530.

Galambos, N. L., & Dixon, R. A. (1984). Toward understanding and caring for latchkey children. Child Care Quarterly, 13, 116-125.

Galambos, N. L., & Garbarino, J. (1985). Adjustment of unsupervised children in a rural setting. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 146, 227-231.

Galambos, N. L., & Silbereisen, R. K. (1987a). Influences of income change and parental acceptance on adolescent transgression proneness and peer relations. European Journal of Psychology and Education, 1, 17-28.

Galambos, N. L., & Silbereisen, R. K. (1987b). Substance use in West German youth: A longitudinal study of adolescents' use of alcohol and tobacco. Journal of Adolescent Research, 2, 161-174.

Kaplan, H. B. (1978). Deviant behavior and self-enhancement in adolescence. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 7, 253-277.

Petersen, A. C., Schulenberg, J. E., Abramowitz, R. H., Offer, D., & Jarcho, H. D. (1984). A self-image questionnaire for young adolescents (SIQYA): Reliability and validity studies. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 13, 93-111.

Rodman, H. Pratto, D. J., & Nelson, R. S. (1985). Child care arrangements and children's functioning: A comparison of self-care and adult-care children. Developmental Psychology, 21, 413-418.

Rodman, H., Pratto, D. J., & Nelson, R. S. (1988). Toward a definition of self-care children: A commentary on Steinberg (1986). Developmental Psychology, 24, 292-294.

Steinberg, L. (1986). Latchkey children and susceptibility to peer pressure: An ecological analysis. Developmental Psychology, 22, 433-439.

Steinberg, L. (1988). Simple solutions to a complex problem: A response to Rodman, Pratto, and Nelson (1988). Developmental Psychology, 24, 295-296.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. (1987). After-school care of school-age children: December 1984 (Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 149). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Vandell, D. L., & Corasaniti, M. A. (1988). The relation between third graders' after-school care and social, academic, and emotional functioning. Child Development, 49, 868-875.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is variation in self-care predictive of peer experience (peer involvement, deviant peers, problem behavior) and self-image (impulse control, mastery, emotional tone) concurrently and six months later?

2. To what extent are parental work hours (number of hours both parents are at work) predictive of concurrent and later peer experience and self-image?

3. Does the seasonal context of self-care (winter afternoons vs. summer days) bear on the relations among self-care, peer experience, and self-image?

SUBJECTS

Subjects are 112 sixth graders (62 girls, 50 boys) participating in the "Two-Earner Family Study," a short-term longitudinal study with three occasions of measurement over a 12-month period. Data from the present study are from the sixth graders and their parents (both wage earners) who completed questionnaires in Winter, 1988 (Time 1) and Summer, 1988 (Time 2).

PREDICTOR VARIABLES

Self-Care - obtained from sixth grader's report in winter, 1988 and summer, 1988

	Winter n	Summer n
0 = Supervised by adult	62	65
1 = Unsupervised at home	25	15
2 = Unsupervised at friend's	10	7
3 = Unsupervised, "hanging out"	15	13

Parental Work Hours

Work-Aft - number of hours per week in winter both parents are at work in 3:00-6:00 time slot.

Work-Day - number of hours per week in summer both parents are at work in 8:00-6:00 time slot.

Sex of Sixth Grader

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Sixth Grader's Report

Peer Involvement - activities with friends

"gone with friends to a movie"

Alpha (6 items) = .75

Deviant Peers - friends engage in misconduct

"I know many kids who have stolen something"

Alpha (4 items) = .69

Problem Behavior - frequency of misconduct

"took things less than $2"

25 items

Impulse Control - calmness under pressure

"I lose my head easily"

Alpha (8 items) = .66

Mastery - confidence in coping

"When I decide to do something, I do it"

Alpha (10 items) = .73

Emotional Tone - positive affect

"Most of the time I am happy"

Alpha (11 items) = .81

TABLE 1

Predicting Time 1 Peer Experiences and Self-Image from Time 1 Self-Care, Parental Work Hours, and Sex

Dependent Variables	Significant Predictors	Beta	Step R2	Final R2
Peer Inv.	Self-Care	.26*	.10*	.11*
Deviant Peers	Sex x Self-Care	-.60*	.04*	.04
Problem Behavior	Sex x Self-Care	-.83*	.07*	.09*
Impulse Control	none	-	-	.04
Mastery	none	-	-	.05
Emotional Tone	none	-	-	.05

* $p < .05$

OVERHEAD #6

TABLE 2

Predicting Time 2 Peer Experiences and Self-Image from Time 2 Self-Care, Parental Work Hours, and Sex

Dependent Variables	Significant Predictors	Beta	Step R2	Final R2
Peer Inv.	none	-	-	.06
Deviant Peers	Sex x Self-Care	-.65*	.04*	.06
Problem Behavior	Self-Care	.26*	.09*	
	Sex x Self-Care	-.68*	.04*	.13*
Impulse Control	none	-	-	.04
Mastery	none	-	-	.02
Emotional Tone	none	-	-	.05

* $p < .05$

TABLE 3

Predicting Time 2 Peer Experiences and Self-Image from Times 1 and 2 Self-Care, Parental Work Hours, and Sex

Dependent Variables	Significant Predictors	Beta	Step R2	Final R2
Peer Inv	none	-	-	.09
Deviant Peers	none	-	-	.07
Problem Behavior	Sex x Self-Care (T1)	-.70*	.05*	
	Sex x Self-Care (T2)	-.65*	.03*	.16*
Impulse Control	Sex x Self-Care (T1)	.67*	.04*	.12
Mastery	Sex x Self-Care (T1)	.60*	.04*	.08
Emotional Tone	none	-	-	.08

* $p < .05$

CONCLUSIONS

1. Variation in self-care experience is more important for predicting behavior than is the number of hours both parents are at work. In no case was parental work hours a significant predictor of peer experience or self-image.

2. Self-care experience has more direct implications for peer activities than it does for self-image, although there may be delayed effects of self-care on aspects of self-image.

3. In early adolescence, girls who are unsupervised away from home may be more at risk for problem behavior than are boys.